



Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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TO: Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent
FROM: Michael Arensdorff, Senior Director of Technology
SUBJECT: Technology Plan Update
DATE: January 26, 2021

Names of presenters: Michael Arensdorff

Type of report: FYI Only - Update on Three-Year Tech Plan and Process

Report format: Informational Only Report

Preview of purpose and content of report: Update the board on the upcoming tech plan and details of what will be coming

At the end of the 2020-21 school year, we will be completing the final year of the second three-year tech plan that I have worked on with the iLearn Advisory Committee and numerous other stakeholders in the district community.

Six years ago the main focus started with upgrades to infrastructure and the start of the 1:1 iLearn initiative with the rollout of 4,200 iPads to Grades 3-8 in 2014. The focus of the second, most recent plan was on upgrades to the wireless network and refresh of our student 1:1 devices. This included the transition to Chromebooks at the middle schools based on the feedback from our middle school students, staff and families. We completed a number of focus groups, surveys and interviews with stakeholders. During those outreach/feedback sessions we heard loud and clear that what we were asking kids to know and be able to do, as well as how we were seeking students to demonstrate their learning, would be better supported with the device of a Chromebook (web-based and keyboard focused).

In addition, during this most recent three-year plan, we have been working with Village of Oak Park to further enhance our back-end infrastructure and bandwidth to all locations. Currently, this work is coming to the final stretch and becoming a reality. As part of the joint fiber project we were able to upgrade our fiber connections to all locations with separate redundant paths to our headend and disaster recovery site with significant savings to the district for decades to come.

We were also able to do many instructional transformations and support for all of our

students with very little other upgrades to shared devices in the last five to six years. That fleet of 650 Macbooks, 450 ipads and about 800 Chromebooks are at their end of life (some stretched beyond it). During this last year, we were able to address the lower grades K-2 to provide all of our students with iPads via the CARES Act funding. We did not need to use any district dollars to purchase the 1,300 devices and cases, which was part of the planning for the upcoming tech plan that will be about \$430,000 in savings. Finally, with our staffing and hires we have saved additional funds as we have been able to complete many upgrade projects, extend the life of hardware and cut many costly services due to the strong skill sets of our staff. More details and specific numbers will be provided in the larger technology plan/report in February/March.

Budget and Cost Cutting Decision Making

As a preview for the upcoming plan, our focus is limiting the total requests to the most important and only items absolutely necessary in the light of the various budget and financial aspects that Rob Grossi and the business department have been sharing with the board over the last few months. With that said, we are working to extend the life of our current hardware (switches, controllers, servers) and infrastructure to extend out for the next four to five years. Our team is confident we can do this and still maintain cybersecurity practices and updates for our systems/hardware. The technology team will continue to explore and look to move many services to the cloud for lower operating costs rather than much larger capital tech plan expenses that have been part of the technology plan in previous years. As mentioned previously, we are also significantly cutting our monthly costs to Comcast that we previously had through our partnership with the Village of Oak Park and through our State Consortium contract for fiber and Internet.

iLearn Advisory Committee Work

As our iLearn Advisory Committee has been reviewing and working through planning this year, our focus has been centered on the students and the tools they are using to support and enhance the learning experience and environment for them. This has proved to be absolutely critical over the last year to have a 1:1 access for our students and families to provide a high level of instructional experience and a transition that is as seamless as possible during this difficult time.

As we move forward with our planning and device refresh cycles our students are on a four-year refresh cycle, which comes up this summer (2021) for our 3rd-8th grade devices and some of our K-2 devices that were previously shared devices. During our planning we have reviewed what we currently have, reviewed data and feedback on those tools and how they support the learning for our students and consulted with many nearby districts on their experiences with device models. This included focus groups, interviews, usage data collection, and this year we will be leveraging ThoughtExchange to gather additional data from various stakeholders as it will be difficult to do some of the same communications strategies due to the pandemic.

Student Device Refresh

For the 2021-22 school year, we are reviewing the refresh of approximately 4,800

devices. By doing this refresh we will continue to be able to provide a 1:1 environment for all of our K-8 students. As part of this refresh we will be selling the current 1:1 devices, as well as the shared devices that I mentioned previously that are end of life. By moving to a full 1:1 environment and removing the shared devices from our fleet, we will be able streamline the level of support for our students and staff, provide greater access to all students, and continue to be adaptive/flexible to what is accessible for students when they need it. These devices continue to be in support of the instructional practices and tools that are identified as the highest leverage tools through collaboration with Teaching and Learning and Special Education, as well as feedback from teachers. Our close collaboration with our departments, buildings, staff, and students have provided our team with great insight into the needs for supporting learning today and remove barriers for what it will/can look like tomorrow.

Highlights for the Refresh

- Exploring keyboard cases for our iPads in 3rd-5th grade (possibly 2nd grade)
- Reviewing Chromebook models in middle school and support models
- K-1 students will continue to leverage the ipads with Otterbox cases that were purchased this year with CARES dollars (\$430,000 savings to district)

While we believe the devices and what we have implemented for the last four years for students have addressed the needs to support their learning and enhanced the environment, we have and will continue to seek ways to improve on the tools for our students. We are focused on identifying the tools to support tools for our students to demonstrate their learning at a high level and use these tools to innovate in their learning. We also strive to find tools that will be highly reliable and consistent.

Next Steps

- Over the next six weeks, the iLearn Advisory Committee will review and advise on communication strategies, participate in a focus group around the tech plan, advise on aspects of the plan based on feedback received through a ThoughtExchange of our community and advise on any other items included in the plan to support our student and staff.
- Launch and run a ThoughtExchange for our students, staff and families.
- Purchase Chromebook devices to explore on functionality, test durability and technical specifications, and how the devices align with student, staff and family feedback to support student learning.
- Explore case options for elementary students to ensure they are durable, protective and features (stand, keyboard, etc).
- Work with vendors to explore resale value of devices that are end of life, with the goal to offset a large amount of the first year payment for the refresh of student devices.
- Gather proposals from multiple vendors on devices for refresh and leasing/purchase options for most competitive and cost effective solution
- Fine tune remaining items/recommendations for next three year tech plan in order to support our students and staff with a forward thinking, innovative approach and in a way that is cost effective, while also identifying other cost saving approaches/revenue opportunities

Professional Learning

As we have included in the last three-year technology plan we will have a focus on ongoing and consistent professional learning opportunities for staff, as well as opportunities for students and families to further their knowledge in how the technology can/will continue to enhance their learning experiences in District 97. This learning will continue to focus on the 4Cs (Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, Critical Thinking) and the ISTE standards.

We will also continue to include plans for our Internet for All program and supporting our staff with research and development and innovative ideas/practices.

In conclusion, this informational report is to provide some further information to the board of education and community regarding the upcoming technology plan that will come to the board in February/March timeline. We will be seeking approval in March to begin any ordering processes as we have done in the past.